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November 17, 2011



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TO: Los Angeles County Hospital CEOs, Physicians, Medical Practices, Community Clinics,
and Ambulatory Care Centers

Re: INFLUENZA VACCINATION OF ALL HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Influenza season is upon us and, as leaders in health care, we share common goals. Chief among them are to minimize the spread of communicable diseases like influenza, provide exceptional healthcare for our citizens, and keep our healthcare worker population healthy.

Vaccination of healthcare workers reduces illness and absenteeism among them, prevents morbidity and mortality in their patients, and results in financial savings to sponsoring health institutions. Some might argue that the best way to prevent transmission of a disease like influenza to the patients we serve is to encourage or even require vaccination of healthcare workers. To this end, two laws currently exist in California requiring healthcare facilities to make flu vaccine available to all their employees and a written declination statement must be signed by employees who refuse the vaccination (CA Health & Safety Code §1288.7 effective January 1, 2007, and Aerosol Transmissible Diseases standard of Cal OSHA, effective September 1, 2010 (8 Cal. Code Regulations § 5199).

In accordance with the intent of these laws, and consistent with the powers of authority of the County Health Officer, I am urging employers to offer and encourage flu vaccination; reinforce the concept of standard precautions such as hand washing; and emphasize that ill staff should not be working in a health care workplace.

Many institutions nationwide and throughout California, including some hospitals in Los Angeles County, are going even further and making flu vaccine a condition of employment -only allowing exceptions for medical conditions or religious beliefs, and some are requiring that unvaccinated employees wear surgical masks during flu season. For a list of other institutions, states, and federal mandates with this requirement, please see www.preventinfluenza.org.

We thank you for your assistance in working with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to make Los Angeles County a healthy community.

Sincerely,

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director and Health Officer

JEF:MP

I:/memos & letters/Flu Vaccination Healthcare Workers